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San Antonio, TX -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it will partner with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) to sponsor 50 summer internships in health-care professions for Hispanic students. Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H., VA Under Secretary for Health and the chief executive officer of the nation's largest integrated health-care system, and HACU President Antonio R. Flores, Ph.D, agreed to place interns in VA facilities across the country.

"Each year, well over 100,000 health professionals receive training at VA through our affiliations with more than 1,200 academic institutions. The HACU internship program will enable VA to increase the number of Hispanic students receiving hands-on experience in a wide variety of health-care professions. Whether planning for a career in physical therapy or health-care administration, VA offers students an opportunity to develop their skills in a modern and innovative health-care system," said Dr. Kizer. The announcement kicked off the annual HACU Conference to be held in San Antonio, Oct. 25-29.

The VA health-care system has an annual budget of more than \$17 billion and employs 200,000 health-care professionals and support staff who care for more than 3 million of the nation's veterans. Over the last three years, VA has restructured its 173 hospitals, 550 outpatient and community-based clinics, 133 nursing homes and other facilities into 22 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN). VA now provides primary care services systemwide and has improved accessibility to care by establishing community-based clinics.

Discussing opportunities for Hispanic students interested in health-care professions, Dr. Kizer noted, "VA provides health care in a team setting. The efforts of doctors and nurse practitioners are complemented by pharmacists, physical therapists, social workers and many other health-care professionals. Community-based clinics supported by telemedicine and other information technology will require health-care professionals trained in state-of-the-art medical technologies. VA's goal is to provide quality health-care services to veterans in their communities, and we are committed to employing a workforce that mirrors the communities we serve."

The HACU internship program will provide VA with a more effective recruitment tool in each of the country's Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI). Undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled in an HSI and interested in applying for a HACU summer internship at VA should contact their college or university office of academic affairs or the HACU website at www.hacu2000.org.

Students will submit applications describing their interests in a variety of health-care professions. The 50 students accepted into VA's HACU summer internship program will be assigned to the 22 VISNs and work in diverse health-care settings, including medical centers, outpatient clinics, nursing homes and community-based clinics.